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July 1992

Questionnaires and Structured Interviews

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Abbreviations	
DMTAG	Design, Methodology, and Technical Assistance Group

Introduction

Day 1**Independent Study**

Note: May be completed before course begins

- Completion of Independent Study
- Fundamentals of Structured Interviews and Questionnaires

Day 2**Classroom**

8:30 - 11:45

- Introduction
- GAO Assignment Panel Presentation
- Review of Questionnaire Fundamentals

12:45 - 4:00

- Review of GAO Policies and Practices
- Feedback on Draft Questions

Day 3**Classroom**

8:30 - 12:00

- Guidelines for Structured Interviews
- Training Staff to Overcome Resistance

1:00 - 4:00

- Practice Training Interviewers
- Feedback on Interviews

**Course
Background**

The course was developed in 1986 by Carole Webb and Celeste Kearney (OOHD), with assistance from Alice Feldesman (RCED), Brian Keenan (PEMD), Stuart Kaufman (GGD), Marilyn Mauch (NSIAD), Erwin Bedarf (HRD), and Bob Minick (OOHD). "Questionnaires and Structured Interviews" was piloted in the spring of 1986. This course was revised in 1988 by Jane Kazman and Linda Ehrlich (TI); Erwin Bedarf (HRD), Fran Featherston (RCED), and Stuart Kaufman (GGD) provided technical assistance.

**Overview of
Course**

At the completion of this course, you will be able to

1. Draft acceptable questions for a mail-out questionnaire or a structured interview that can be developed further with assistance from design, methodology, and technical assistance groups (DMTAGs)
2. Properly conduct and instruct others how to conduct a structured interview

The course applies the concepts of the structured data collection instrument to

1. Questionnaires, used by evaluators to efficiently reach large numbers of people and cases without having direct contact
2. Structured interviews, used to maximize the comparability of information gathered in interviews

When well-developed, these tools help you ensure that differences among responses reflect actual differences from one unit to the other, not differences in the way the question was asked or understood. The 2 days of classroom training follow the independent study, applying information in GAO transfer papers to a GAO case (module 1).

Introduction

The first day of classroom training (modules 2 and 3) includes an introduction and a panel presentation by an evaluator and a technical advisor who have worked together on a GAO questionnaire or a structured interview. You will review the fundamentals of questionnaire and structured interview design. The instructor and fellow participants will provide feedback on draft questions developed during the independent studies.

The second day of classroom training (module 4) focuses on structured interviews: developing them, overcoming resistance in conducting them, and teaching team members to conduct them.

GAO evaluators often must compare attributes of many people, situations, and/or records. You must rely on knowledge and evidence held by experts, administrators, and beneficiaries of the federal programs they are reviewing. To accurately collect, aggregate, and compare information from multiple sources, evaluators must collect the same information in the same manner each time. This is particularly important when you plan to describe the universe on the basis of a randomly selected sample of cases. Evaluators cannot generalize with confidence information from even the best-drawn sample unless it is collected uniformly from each unit in the sample.

Purpose

Questionnaire and structured interview design requires expertise drawn from years of study and experience. The purpose of this course is not to produce "instant experts" but to give you an appreciation for the proper construction of questionnaires, the proper structuring of an interview, and the proper use of each. With this knowledge, you can fully use the technical expertise of DMTAGs and other advisers in finalizing the instruments.

**Course
Objectives**

Upon completion of the course, you will be able to

1. Identify specific assignment questions for which a questionnaire or a structured interview would be appropriate
2. Identify a universe of informed persons or records that might yield data to respond to the question
3. Justify the selection of the appropriate techniques
4. Develop a logical line of questioning to obtain the required data
5. Draft a series of questions
6. Diagnose potential bias, ambiguity, or structural weaknesses in the questions
7. Work with a technical adviser to revise and improve questions
8. Apply GAO principles and guidelines in administering the questionnaire or conducting the structured interview
9. Conduct a structured interview

Module 1: Independent Study

Synopsis You will read the GAO Methodology Transfer Papers, Using Structured Interviewing Techniques and Developing and Using Questionnaires. As they review the phases in instrument design and implementation, you will prepare a short series of questions relating to a GAO assignment objective or study question.

Objectives At the end of the module, you will be able to

1. Identify the appropriate alternative structured data collection technique to apply in your assignments
2. Develop a logical line of questioning to obtain data
3. Draft a series of questions
4. Diagnose potential bias, ambiguity, or structural weaknesses in the questions

Instructions The independent study portion of this course enables you to review the basics of questionnaire and structured interview development and implementation and to apply them to a GAO assignment objective or study question.

As emphasized in GAO's Approach and Methodology Selection Workshop, questionnaires and structured interviews are appropriate options for data collection only if they help you respond to a specific assignment question. Therefore, it is important that you take the following steps in completing this independent study.

1. **Identify a GAO assignment question for which you could develop a structured data collection instrument.**

This question should be specific and measurable. It should direct you to the people, the records, or the organizations that can answer the question (e.g., "Did CETA program graduates get jobs at a higher rate than nongraduates?" rather than "Is the CETA program effective?").

Module 1: Independent Study

If you are not currently working on an appropriate GAO assignment, select a question from an issue area you are familiar with or one from the list in appendix II.

2. **Complete the worksheet (app. I) as you read the assigned materials and apply them to your assignment question.**

Chapters labeled "Questionnaires" refer to the GAO Transfer Paper, Developing and Using Questionnaires.

Those marked "Structured Interviewing" refer to the GAO Transfer paper, Using Structured Interviewing Techniques.

3. A copy of your completed worksheet must be submitted to either the course manager or the instructor by 4 p.m. of day 1 of the course (the independent study day) so the instructor can give you feedback and identify areas for attention in class.

If you do not plan to attend day 1 and you are taking the course in Washington, D.C., you must make sure that your completed worksheet reaches the course manager by 4 p.m. of day 1.

If you do not plan to attend day 1 and are taking the course outside of Washington, D.C., the worksheet must reach the course manager 1 week in advance of day 1 of the course.

The address for the course manager is:

**U.S. General Accounting Office
Training Institute
Attn.: QSIE Course Manager
Room 7424
Washington, DC 20548**

**Begin Reading
and Complete
the Worksheet
as Instructed****1. Determine the assignment objective**

Structured Interviewing, pages i-ii, and chapter 1 (Skim)

Questionnaires, chapter 1 (Read)

Worksheet:

Identify a GAO assignment topic you would like to work on in this course. The course will be most helpful if you are now planning to develop a questionnaire or structured interview for an assignment. Do not use a GAO assignment for which a questionnaire or an interview has already been developed and used.

The independent study is meant to be a learning experience; therefore, we would like you to use new assignments in the scoping phase. If you do not have an assignment in mind, some suggestions are listed in appendix II. Complete the worksheets (app. I) starting on page 1.

Section 1: Identify the overall objective of the assignment, the broad question you are trying to answer.

2. Develop the assignment question**Worksheet:**

Section 2: Identify a specific researchable question related to the overall objective that you can collect data for using either a structured interview, a self-administered questionnaire, or another data collection instrument.

This question should focus your inquiry and direct you to those who can give you the data you need to answer it.

3. Define the informed population/universe

Questionnaires, chapter 4, pages 37-41 and 44-46 (Read)

Worksheet:

Section 3a: Identify the universe that will provide the answers to your research questions. This may be the person or the record that most directly has the attitude, the opinion, or the information that you are trying to measure or a person who has most directly observed what you are trying to measure. A record may be identified, as well as a person, since records can contain the evidence you are measuring.

In theory, you should enumerate every unit in this population, but in practice this may be difficult. The enumeration must be a reasonably complete representation of the actual population. For example, you may want data about waiting lines at post offices.

If you are concerned about the citizen's opinion of waiting times, ask the citizen. If you want information on the actual length of waits, request data from the postmaster. Keep in mind that your task for this independent study is to develop one instrument to be used with a single universe.

Section 3b: List the relevant subsets of the universe that you might be interested in and why. How is the population distributed? What are the major characteristics within the population (for example, post office customers on personal business versus customers on company business; urban versus rural locations; weekday versus Saturday customers)?

Section 3c: At this point, you need to think about how many respondents/records you will need to obtain information from. In other words, are you going to collect information from the entire universe or a sample?

Section 3d: List potential sources to investigate, and note potential problems. How will you identify and enumerate these people/records? What sources might systematically and accurately list the population and locations? (An example is a list of street addresses from post office.)

4. List information needed

Worksheet:

Section 4: For the assignment question you have selected, list the information you need to answer it. These are the variables you want to measure.

5. Select the best data collection technique

Structured Interviewing, chapter 2 (Read)

Questionnaires, chapter 2 (Skim)

Participant Manual, module 4, pages 4-5 to 4-7 (Read)

Worksheet:

Section 5a: First, review the advantages to structuring the questions, whether in a questionnaire, a data collection instrument (for example, a record review), or an interview.

What advantages would structuring the questions have over using an open-ended, semistructured interview or a general list of questions or information needs? What aspects of your project's credibility will you help protect by carefully composing precise and uniform questions? For example, one advantage is the capacity to generalize responses from a sample to the universe of cases. Other advantages may be more appropriate to your case.

Section 5b: Next, review strengths and weaknesses of the options for structured data collection. On the worksheet, place a check in the cells that are the best option(s) for each factor for your particular data collection effort. For some factors, you must initially decide whether each is an issue for your data collection effort, while other factors apply to all types of efforts.

For example, if time is short, you may see telephone interviews as the best option. If you need a high response rate to achieve external validity (generalize to the universe) a group questionnaire (i.e., a questionnaire administered to a group gathered together) is best and the personal interview is next best.

Section 5c: Assess your options and justify them according to guidance in the transfer papers. Usually, you cannot meet all criteria, so you will have to weigh the trade-offs. For example, telephone interviews may take less time, but what would you do if you were surveying low income respondents who may not have telephones?

6. Draft questions

Questionnaires, chapter 5, pages 47-60 and 62-65 (Read) and chapter 12 (Skim)

Structured Interviewing, chapter 3 (Skim)

Worksheet:

Section 6: Following a line of questioning, draft about 10 questions. Consider using a variety of question types.

Format the questions the way they would be typed on a questionnaire or an interview form.

7. Diagnose question weaknesses

Questionnaires, chapter 6 (Read); chapter 7 (Skim); chapter 9, pages 91-97 (Read); chapter 9, pages 97-100 (Skim); chapter 10 (Skim);

Structured Interviewing, chapter 4 (Skim)

Worksheet:

Section 7a: Review each question you have written for clarity, bias control, ability to respond, logic, relevancy, and appropriateness.

Section 7b: Rewrite questions that may have these problems. (Note: Almost every question must be written several times, so do not be surprised when you spot weaknesses.)

8. Reassess the data collection technique

Worksheet:

Section 8: Now that you have drafted the questions you plan to use, go back and review section 5 of the worksheet to reevaluate and determine which data collection technique would be best.

9. Select pretest criteria

Questionnaires, chapter 13 (Read)

Structured Interviewing, chapter 5 (Read)

Worksheet:

Section 9: Think about how you might select a pretest group. Note questions you may have regarding pretest procedures.

10. List questions about implementation

Structured Interviewing, chapters 6 and 8 (Read)

Worksheet:

Section 10: Make note of questions you would like to raise in class. You may include these questions with your worksheet for the instructor's review.

Module 2: Introduction and Panel Presentation

Synopsis

The guidelines for developing effective questionnaires and structured interviews are based on basic principles: precision, clarity, uniformity, comparability, and objectivity. All these guidelines work to improve the reliability and the validity of the data being collected. The course begins with a brief review of these principles and concepts. Following introductions of the participants and their structured data collection projects, a panel consisting of GAO evaluators and a technical specialist discusses a GAO assignment that used a mail-out questionnaire or a face-to-face interview. Participants then use a series of prepared case studies and their own work to guide a review of the fundamentals that they learned in the independent study.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, you will be able to

1. Identify lessons learned from a GAO assignment that used a mail-out questionnaire or a structured face-to-face interview
2. Identify guidelines to better draft questions
3. Apply fundamentals learned in modules 1 and 2 to scenarios and problem questions

Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction: course, instructor, participants
2. Presentation of GAO assignment panel
3. Guidelines for writing questions
4. Practice exercises

Module 2: Introduction and Panel Presentation

**Validity and
Reliability**

Validity:

Does the question measure the concept?

Reliability:

Would asking the question again obtain the same answer?

Exercise

What factors could threaten validity and reliability?

Take 5 minutes to write a list.

**Types of
Questions:
Advantages and
Disadvantages****Open-ended questions:**

- Broad
- Focused
- Pseudo open-ended
- Fill-in-the-blank

Closed-ended questions:

- Yes/No

- Single response (Check one)

- Multiple response (Check all that apply.)

- Balanced scale

- Unbalanced scale

Module 2: Introduction and Panel Presentation

-- Matrix

-- Rating

-- Ranking

References:

Using Structured Interviewing Techniques,
Chapter 3

Developing and Using Questionnaires, Chapter 5

**Discussion Questions:
Review of Questionnaire
and Structured Interview
Fundamentals**

1. A GAO team wants to compare the incidence and the causes of truancy in high schools in rural/urban/suburban schools. Does it need a structured data collection instrument? Why or why not?
2. A GAO team is interviewing participants in new cooperative task forces made up of agents from the FBI; the Treasury Department; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and the Bureau of Customs. Previous attempts to get these groups to work together have failed, reportedly because of differences in philosophy and approach to law enforcement. Should the team structure the interviews? Why or why not?
3. A GAO team has been asked to assess the short- and long-term effects of crime on the families of the victims in major metropolitan areas. It also has been asked to assess the degree to which families were offered and used services meant to alleviate these effects. Should the team use a telephone interview or a mail survey?
4. A GAO team is to assess whether project officers in DOE are familiar with the guidelines for selecting grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements as the proper mechanism for transferring funds to private and governmental entities. From whom should it collect the data?
5. A GAO team has been asked to assess why units were vacant in housing projects for the elderly funded by HUD. From whom should it collect information? How might it collect the information? What problems might the team have?
6. A GAO team is to assess whether training programs provided to unemployed youth helped them obtain jobs. From whom should it collect information?

Module 2: Introduction and Panel Presentation

7. What is wrong here? Diagnose the problems in the following questions and answers.

- a. A hotel questionnaire asked visitors to rate services with the following question:

Did you use and how would you rate the following services?

	Excellent	Good	Fair
Restaurants	_____	_____	_____
Front desk	_____	_____	_____
Reservations	_____	_____	_____
Pool or beach	_____	_____	_____

- b. Which of the following best describes the effect local measured telephone service has had on your telephone bill?
1. My bill has greatly increased.
 2. My local bill has stayed the same.
 3. My local bill has somewhat decreased.

- c. To what extent do you receive guidance from the U.S. Attorney on the conduct of case investigations?
 - 1. To a little or no extent
 - 2. To some extent
 - 3. To a moderate extent
 - 4. To a great extent
 - d. Given the necessity of reducing the federal deficit, do you support
 - 1. The Gramm-Rudman plan?
 - 2. Across-the-board cuts in federal salaries?
 - 3. Reductions in unnecessary cost-of-living increases for federal retirees?
 - 4. Other?
8. A GAO team conducted brief on-the-street interviews with residents of a military base to determine if they considered the security adequate for their protection. How might the results of this survey be biased?

Module 3: Principles and Practices in GAO

Synopsis

GAO has some specific guidelines for managing questionnaires and structured interviews in chapters 7.0 and 10.0 of the General Policy Manual and chapters 7.1 and 10.1 of the Project Manual. Also, GAO encourages certain practices meant to maximize the response rates to mail-out questionnaires. You will review some case situations related to these guidelines and discuss them with the instructor.

Objectives

At the end of this module, you will be able to use GAO guidelines to

1. Identify principles and practices relating to confidentiality, response rates, verification, and planning
2. Diagnose question weaknesses

Outline of Presentation

1. Presentation of GAO principles and practices
2. Group exercise relating to confidentiality, response rates, verification, and planning
3. Feedback on participants' work

**Case Studies:
GAO Principles
and Practices**

1. Your audit/evaluation team, under your direction as EIC, has determined that a mail-out questionnaire would be the best technique to collect information from employees who lost their federal jobs due to the contracting of their functions under OMB Circular A-76. The director has considered your plan but is not convinced that you need all the time you have requested to complete the assignment. Since the committee has specifically requested information on the hardship imposed on displaced workers, you are convinced that you must go directly to these employees. Your assistant director has set up a meeting with the director and believes that you can convince him/her of the need for the time requested if you logically lay out the phases that you must go through to develop a good questionnaire. Your job is to present the major steps you and the DMTAG staff are required to take and the time you expect each to take. Briefly list the justification for each time estimate. You estimate a sample size of 300 employees from the 15 DOD functions with the largest number of affected civilian positions.
2. You promised confidentiality to the physicians who responded to a questionnaire about how they decide to discharge elderly patients from hospitals. This questionnaire is a part of a study to assess the effects of DRGs (diagnostic related groupings) imposed on hospitals under Medicare regulations. Some claim that doctors do not want to risk requesting too many exceptions to the maximum stay limits imposed by the DRGs and that, as a result, physicians are encouraged to discharge elderly patients without regard for their ability to continue care in their homes.

When you sent the questionnaire, you were convinced that physicians would not answer correctly or at all unless you could promise confidentiality. The committee chairman is now asking for the names of respondents so he can call them to testify before the Congress on the extent of the problem. What should you do? Should you have offered confidentiality to the respondents? What else can you do to protect yourself?

3. You are planning a questionnaire to go to small business operators regarding the effect of changes in the telephone systems on their business costs. Are you concerned about the response rates you will get? Why or why not? What factors might work to improve the response rate, and what factors might inhibit it? How can you maximize the responses?
4. Your team is sending a questionnaire to Vietnam veterans to assess whether they were given proper screening to detect effects of Agent Orange exposure. You are concerned that the veterans may give biased responses, due to lack of memory, desire to influence the results, or lack of technical knowledge of the procedures followed in the examinations. List four or five procedures you might follow to validate the information you receive.

**Excerpt from
the General
Policy Manual
on Pledges of
Confidentiality**

"Pledges of confidentiality may occasionally be helpful in obtaining information, and sometimes eliminate concern about how specific data will be reported.

"Before pledges of confidentiality are made, division management must approve their use in writing early in the assignment. In deciding whether to approve a pledge of confidentiality, division management should be satisfied that the pledge will not jeopardize assignment objectives and that any limitations it may impose on future access rights are acceptable. OGC will advise on the implications to future access rights. An agreement must be reached with the requester to ensure that pledges can be honored. OGC can advise on the wording of pledges."

(General Policy Manual, page 7.0-5; side caption:
Pledges of Confidentiality)

Module 3: Principles and Practices in GAO

**Notes on
GAO
Practices**

Timing of development and implementation

Confidentiality

Response rates

Validation of responses

**List of
Specific Tasks
in Developing
and Using
Questionnaires**

1. Planning the questionnaire:
 - Review the evaluation design.
 - Identify the measurement constructs.
2. Developing the measurements:
 - Develop all measurement constructs and translate them into qualitative and quantitative measures.
 - Identify standards against which to compare the data collected.
 - Identify units of analysis and target populations.
 - Select, develop, and assess validation techniques.
 - Develop a data analysis plan, including statistical approaches.
3. Designing the sample:
 - Specify the universe, evaluate its adequacy and efficiency, and identify and assess the source for universe identification.
 - Decide whether to use a statistical sample or a nonstatistical sample.¹
 - Develop a sampling design, assess its adequacy and efficiency, and develop sample selection procedures.

¹ Sometimes questionnaires might be applied to the entire universe.

4. Developing and testing the questionnaire:
 - Create a question pool.
 - Select questions from the pool.
 - Design the pretest form.
 - Develop pretest procedures, and select pretest sites and units.
 - Conduct pretests.
 - Obtain expert reviews and peer reviews.
 - Review expert and peer comments.
 - Revise the pretest form to obtain the final instrument design.
 - Develop and test validation instruments.
5. Producing the questionnaire:
 - Design the form, produce camera-ready copy, and supervise and coordinate graphic and printing services.
6. Preparing and distributing mailing materials for mail-out questionnaires:
 - Develop address lists and edit them for keypunching onto computer tape or another device.
 - Develop a transmittal letter.
 - Duplicate the transmittal letter and load the address lists on an appropriate device.
 - Design and assemble mail-out materials.

- Check accuracy of mailing lists and make corrections.
 - Distribute materials.
7. Collecting data:
- Specify follow-up, nondeliverable, and mortality analysis procedures and execute them.
 - Log and track returns.
 - Specify and supervise data collection procedures.
8. Reducing the data to forms that can be analyzed:
- Edit returned questionnaires for response consistency and adequacy of keypunch entries.
 - Manage data base loading onto a computer as necessary.
 - Specify keypunch verification procedures and make verifications.
 - Clean up the data base and check the hard copy of item responses.
9. Analyzing the data:
- Develop code books.
 - Produce descriptive statistics.
 - Update the analysis plan.
 - Test hypotheses and conduct multivariate analysis when appropriate.
 - Interpret the analysis and draw conclusions.

10. Reporting the results:

- Record findings.
- Write the methodology. A separate technical appendix may also be included.
- Index findings, prepare workpapers, and answer referencer comments.
- Have results reviewed and approved by a technical representative.

**Tips to
Remember in
Using GAO
Mail-out
Questionnaires**

1. Plan for the resources and support you will need to stuff envelopes and sign letters. All letters are signed individually with a blue ballpoint pen.
2. If the number of letters to be signed is small enough (under 1,000), assign the signing procedure to one person. If the burden is greater, assign specific control numbers to your signers so they can sign the same respondents' follow-up letters as well.
3. Write control numbers in the upper right-hand corner of the questionnaires in **ballpoint pen** so you can trace it if respondents try to cover it up or apply identification labels to the first page of the questionnaire.
4. When using white window envelopes, fold the letters and the questionnaires so the addresses are clearly seen when the outside envelopes are stuffed. Place the return envelopes inside the questionnaire folds so they do not get thrown away with the outside envelopes. **While you are stuffing envelopes, have in the room only the materials you will send.**
5. The business reply mail envelopes should be addressed to an appropriate GAO office, such as a GAO Headquarters division; a regional office; or, in some cases, an audit site.

6. Include the return address on the questionnaire instructions.
7. Include on both the letters and the questionnaires more than one name to call if there are questions, in case the EIC is not in the office. Alert the secretary that calls may come in, and give instructions on what to do with them. **Get permission from the Assistant Comptroller General's office to accept collect calls,** and use a log to record them.
8. Check with the Mailroom before you use envelopes to be sure that they are most current versions. Sometimes you may find an old supply of envelopes that do not have the proper information on them. Proofread the envelopes.
9. Make sure you review the mailing list for errors. Try to identify individual's appropriate titles--Ms., Mr., Mrs., Dr.
10. Before printing, give a copy of the questionnaire to the person who will be analyzing the data, so embedded coding and keypunch instructions can be double-checked, if they are used.
11. Include yourself as one of the mailees to test if the entire package arrived as you wanted it to.
12. Have printed 2-1/2 times the number of questionnaires needed. This will save time when you are ready to send the follow-up letters to those who have not responded.
13. Generally, you will get half the responses from the first mailing, half the remainder from the second mailing, and half the remainder on the third mailing. Of course, this percentage may vary with the type of respondent, the importance of the subject matter to the respondent, etc. GAO frequently gets 100-percent response from state government agencies.

Module 3: Principles and Practices in GAO

14. Be careful in evaluating preliminary data runs from your first returns. They often represent the extreme views, and more moderate views come in later.
15. Plan sufficient time to explain the editing rules to the staff, to edit the questionnaires as they are received, and to verify questionnaires after they are keypunched.

Module 3: Principles and Practices in GAO

**Exercise:
Survey of
Commuter
Behavior**

Before class tomorrow, write a short interview and interview three people--colleagues, friends, family members, neighbors, travelers you meet--about their commuting patterns. In class, we will pool information as if each of us were part of a study of commuting behavior in this area (Washington, D.C., or regional office area).

[**Note:** Don't worry about the sample selection; we will assume individuals were randomly selected.]

Module 4: Structured Interviews

Synopsis

The face-to-face structured interview uses standardized questions in a particular sequence to gather comparable data from all respondents. It is particularly effective when face-to-face interaction is necessary to gather sensitive or complex information or to ensure a high response rate.

In this module, you will review the rationale for structured interviews and explore ways to respond to difficult situations that you might encounter. Emphasis is placed on the training that the EIC or DMTAG can provide to staff who conduct interviews.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, you will be able to

1. Explain the rationale for using structured and semistructured interviews
2. Identify when structured interviewing is the appropriate data collection method
3. Introduce the interview process to the respondent by explaining the rationale for the structured interview
4. Respond appropriately to interview problems
5. Train others on the rationale for structured interviews and proper procedures for implementing the structured interview process
6. Conduct a structured interview

Outline of Presentation

1. Debriefing of commuter survey
2. Definition, rationale, and guidelines for structured interviews
3. Differences between semistructured and structured interviews.

-
4. Guidelines and techniques for conducting structured interviews
 5. Overcoming resistance (video tape vignettes)
 6. Role play and feedback
 - Conducting a structured interview
 - Briefing and training staff

Module 4: Structured Interviews

**Differences
Between
General or
Semistructured
and Structured
Interviews****General
or
Semistructured Structured**

Purpose

Stage of job

Number of interviews

Type of questions

Sequence of questions

Wording of questions

Responses

Recording

Pretesting

**Introduction
to Table**

Many factors influence the selection of the data collection methods used to answer an audit/evaluation question. Such factors may be methodological, content-oriented, or administrative in nature.

The following table was designed to provide a systematic comparison of the characteristics and the advantages of four commonly used data collection methods--face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, mail-out questionnaires, and group questionnaires. The characteristics or the advantages are grouped in the table according to the area of concern--methodological, content, universe or sample, time/cost/resources, and results/response/data quality.

The data collection methods are then rated according to the extent to which they exhibit each characteristic or advantage. The highest rating is "To a very great extent," and the lowest is "To little or no extent." The table was adapted from the table on page 5 of Methodology Transfer Paper 5, Using Structured Interviewing Techniques. When more than one of the data-gathering methods demonstrates the characteristic or advantage to the same extent, those methods are listed together. An example for using the table follows.

Table 4.1: Advantages of Data Collection Methods

Characteristics or Advantages	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little or no extent
<u>Methodological</u>					
Controls bias of collector	Mail ^a	Group ^b	Telephone ^c	Face ^d	
Enables evaluator to overcome unexpected events in data collection	Face	Telephone	Group	Mail	
Facilitates feedback about instrument or collection procedures	Face Group	Telephone		Mail	
Allows oral and visual inquiry	Face Group			Mail	Telephone
Facilitates interchange with source of information	Face Group	Telephone		Mail	
Allows evaluator to control collection procedures	Face	Group	Telephone		Mail

Module 4: Structured Interviews

Characteristics or Advantages	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little or no extent
<u>Content</u>					
Allows inclusion of most relevant variables	Face	Mail Group	Telephone		
Allows complex subject matter to be presented or obtained	Face	Group	Telephone Mail		
Allows collection of real-time data	Face Telephone Group	Mail			
Allows acquisition of historical data		Telephone Face Mail Group			
<u>Universe or sample</u>					
Facilitates contacting/getting sample		Mail Group	Telephone	Face	
Allows use with large sample	Mail	Telephone Group	Face		
Allows identity of source to be known	Face Group	Telephone	Mail		
Reduces problems due to respondents' illiteracy or lack of sophistication in subject	Face	Telephone	Group		Mail

Module 4: Structured Interviews

Characteristics or Advantages	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little or no extent
<u>Time/cost/resources</u>					
Minimizes instrument development time			Face	Telephone	Mail Group
Minimizes staff training	Mail		Group	Telephone	Face
Has low overall cost	Mail	Group	Telephone		Face
<u>Results/response/quality of data</u>					
Maximizes rate of return of data after source is contacted	Face Group	Telephone	Mail		
Minimizes follow-up after initial response	Face Telephone	Group	Mail		
Facilitates recall of data by source	Face	Telephone Group	Mail		

^a "Mail" refers to mail-out questionnaire.

^b "Group" refers to a situation when a group of individuals is gathered in one place and each individual fills out a self-administered questionnaire.

^c "Telephone" refers to telephone interview.

^d "Face" refers to face-to face interview.

Module 4: Structured Interviews

**Overcoming
Resistance**

Objectives:

1. Control the interview.
2. Continue the flow.
3. Complete the questions.

Steps:

1. Be alert; anticipate.
2. Listen to the message, not just the words.
3. Respond to the message.
4. Continue the interview.

ROUTING SLIP

Problem Form No. _____

TAN: 056904

DATE: 4/14/93

☐ Recommendations

- ☐ Form 48
- ☐ Form 115
- ☐ Form 103
- ☐ Issue Area
- ☐ Intent Code
- ☐ Budget Function
- ☐ Other

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July 1992

Questionnaires and Structured Interviews

July 1992

Questionnaires and Structured Interviews

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

Name: _____

Unit: _____

Phone Number: _____

Course Date: _____

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

1. Determine the assignment objective (broad question).

2. Develop the assignment question (narrower, researchable question).

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

3. Define the informed population/universe.

- a. Who are the informed person(s) or which record(s) can be used to provide answers to the questions on your data collection instrument?

- b. What subsets/portions of this universe are of interest?

1.

2.

3.

4.

- c. Do you plan to collect information from the universe or a sample? Why?

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

- d. Enumeration issues--how will you obtain the names of individuals and/or organizations? Will you use an existing mailing list?

4. List information needed. (Do not write questions. Continue on extra sheet if necessary).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

7.

8.

9.

10.

5. Select the best data collection technique.

- a. What are the advantages of using structured questions over open-ended questions?

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

5b: Options for Each Factor That Is an Issue for Your Data Collection Effort

Factors to be assessed for your data collection effort	Is factor an issue?		Options For factors that are issues, check which option is best for each factor.				
			Structured interview		Self-administered questionnaire		Other data collection instruments (e.g. record review)
	No	Yes	Face-to- face	Telephone	Group	Mail-out	
Socio-economic level of respondents							
Need for GAO to interact with respondent							
Complexity of subject matter							
Travel restrictions							
Need for anonymity							
Need for confidentiality							
Need for validity checks							
Others (Please specify)							

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

5b: Options for Each Factor for Your Data Collection Effort

Factors to be assessed for your data collection effort	Options Check which option is best for each factor.				
	Structured interview		Self-administered questionnaire		Other data collection instruments (e.g. record review)
	Face-to- face	Telephone	Group	Mail-out	
Cost					
Time					
Number of questions					
Size of universe or sample					
Response rate required					

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

c. Check those options you would eliminate.

Face-to-face interview _____

Telephone interview _____

Group questionnaire _____

Mail-out questionnaire _____

Data collection instrument
(use for record review) _____

What are your best options? Why?

Best: _____

Reason: _____

Next best: _____

Reason: _____

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

6. Write the question and identify the type in parentheses following the question.

Use additional sheets if necessary.

For example: About how many times did you go to the post office in the last 3 months? _____. (Fill-in-the-blank.)

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

6. (Continued)

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

7a: Diagnosing Question Weaknesses

A. Review 10 of your questions according to the criteria listed. Write "OK" if the criterion is met and "X" if it is not. Feel free to mark up the questions as you revise them.

Note: Some criteria may be more or less relevant to your questions.

Question										
Criteria and reference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Clarity (SI) ^a p. 23 (Q) ^b ch. 7										
Bias control (SI), p. 25; (Q), ch. 9										
Ability to respond (Q), ch. 6										
Logic (Q), ch. 6										
Relevancy (Q), ch. 6										
Appropriateness (Q), ch. 6										

Note: SI: Using Structured Interview Techniques.

Q: Developing and Using Questionnaires.

B. Revise the questions to correct problems you may have spotted.
Add additional sheets, if necessary.

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

- 7b. Revise the questions to correct problems you may have spotted. Use additional sheets, if necessary.

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

7b. (Continued)

Appendix I: Independent Study Worksheets

8. Reassess the data collection technique.

What is your final choice of data collection technique?

9. Select pretest criteria.

10. List questions about implementation.

Appendix II: Assignment Questions for Independent Work

If you are **not** now working on an appropriate assignment, select one of the following assignment questions for your independent work:

1. Do GAO employees use flextime to better accommodate child care and other family responsibilities?
2. How do members of GAO assignment teams share personal computers?
3. What are the most effective programs to help people to quit smoking?
4. How do federal employees decide what health insurance plan to select?